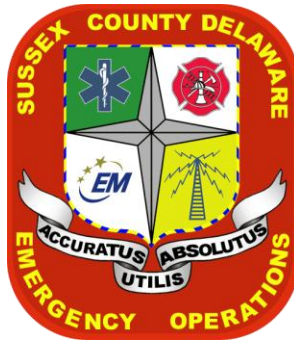


Joseph L. Thomas
Director
(302) 855-7801 Office
(302) 855-7805 Fax
(302) 855-7803 Office After Hours
(302) 855-7800 Fax After Hours



Sussex County
EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER
21911 RUDDER LANE
P.O. BOX 589
GEORGETOWN, DE 19947

Delaware orders evacuation, declares emergency as Hurricane Irene nears

***Storm center expected to graze coastal Sussex County; will come
close enough to bring hurricane-force winds, severe flooding***

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

**1800 Hours, Thursday
Aug. 25, 2011**

Delaware's governor has issued an evacuation order for visitors in Sussex County as the most significant tropical threat to the region in years continues its march toward the East Coast, bringing with it hurricane-force winds, catastrophic tidal flooding, and torrential rains throughout much of the weekend.

State and county officials are urging residents, visitors and property owners along the Inland Bays, Delaware Bay and along the Del. Route 1 corridor to move now to higher ground ahead of Hurricane Irene. The storm's center is expected to graze Delaware to the east late Saturday night into Sunday, but the wide swath of the system would still bring 75 mph winds with gusts to 100 mph, more than a foot of rain and a storm surge of 4 to 7 feet.

The evacuation order is effective at 6 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 25, and applies to visitors. Meantime, County officials are urging those in flood-prone areas, particularly within $\frac{3}{4}$ -miles of major Sussex waterways, to relocate as soon as possible. This includes the communities of Slaughter Beach, Prime Hook, Broadkill Beach, Long Neck and Oak Orchard, as well along the Del. Route 1 corridor, including the areas in and around Lewes, Henlopen Acres, Rehoboth Beach, Dewey Beach, North Bethany, Bethany Beach, South Bethany and Fenwick Island.

Individuals in these areas should move to higher ground, either with family or friends. Shelters have not been designated at this time, though that information will be forthcoming in the hours and day ahead.

Continued

Emergency responders will be using the Delaware Emergency Notification System and going door to door to urge residents in these areas to leave. Meantime, Delaware Gov. Jack A. Markell has declared a state of emergency, allowing the resources including the Delaware National Guard to be activated and put into place.

“This is a very dangerous, potentially deadly storm we’re facing, the likes of which we have not seen in a very long time. The prospects of Sussex County escaping this time unscathed are looking more remote,” said Joseph L. Thomas, director of the Sussex County Emergency Operations Center. “The public needs to take this threat very seriously, and residents, property owners and visitors should be moving into action now to prepare themselves and their property.”

The County is now working with State emergency planners and the American Red Cross of the Delmarva Peninsula to identify and staff shelters for those moving out of harm’s way. Information on those shelter locations will be issued to local media once an announcement is ready.

Once shelter information is announced, those visiting a shelter should take adequate clothing, medications, sleeping materials, and non-perishable foods and drinks for themselves and their families.

The public is reminded to have supply kits ready, know the evacuation routes, and plan ahead on where to relocate before getting on the road.

A hurricane watch is in effect for Sussex County. The National Hurricane Center’s latest forecast has the center of the Category 3 storm, now with sustained winds of 115 mph, to pass approximately 40 to 50 miles off the Delaware coast late Saturday night or early Sunday morning, before moving off to New England later in the evening. At that time, the storm may be slightly less intense, at Category 2 status, with sustained winds of 100 mph. Still, the storm would be potent and close enough to Delaware to pose a serious threat to lives and property.

Forecasters do not expect Sussex County will sustain a direct hit from the eye of the storm. However, winds of at least 75 mph or more are expected across the county throughout the event, with the storm at its strongest between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. Sunday. Meantime, the storm could create a surge of 4 to 7 feet of water along the oceanfront, and 3 to 5 feet along the Inland Bays and Delaware Bay. The storm is also expected to kick up swells of 12 to 24 feet on the seas, and dump as much as a foot of rain.

Continued

Sussex County EOC officials are urging visitors to the coastal communities to avoid traveling here, or return home if they are already in the area.

Before leaving their properties, residents and property owners should secure loose objects, such as lawn chairs and trash cans, to prevent storm winds from turning those items into potential projectiles. Also, residents in low-lying tidal areas should make sure submersible pumps are working and check storm drains to ensure they are clear of debris. Vehicles should be relocated from flood-prone areas.

The Sussex County EOC encourages residents and visitors to continue monitoring the tropics and conditions as they deteriorate. For updates, stay tuned to local media, the Sussex County EOC website at www.sussexcountype.gov/services/storm, and the County's Twitter feeds at www.twitter.com/sussex_pio and www.twitter.com/sussexctyde_eoc. The public should also monitor the National Weather Service, at www.nws.noaa.gov/er/phi, for the latest forecast, and www.deldot.gov for the latest traffic updates.

For helpful tips on what to do in preparation for a hurricane, including the County evacuation map and other preparedness materials, visit www.sussexcountype.gov/services/storm.

For more information, members of the public can call the Sussex County EOC's storm line at (302) 856-7366.

###

Media calls should be directed to EOC spokeswoman Debra Jones at (302) 855-7801 or Sussex County Chief of Public Information Chip Guy at (302) 858-0505.